

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 05090 050815Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 OES-07 EB-07 COME-00

DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

/096 W

-----051417Z 011359 /43

R 050736Z MAY 77

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO /SECSTATE WASHDC 4766

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION USUN

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 5090

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SPOP, CH

SUBJ: SZECHUAN'S POPULATION -- UP 10 MILLION IN SIX MONTHS

A) 76 HONG KONG A-187; B) 76 HONG KONG 11649; C) 76 HONG KONG 7375

1. AN NCNA DISPATCH FROMSZECHUNAN APRIL 28, FRONT-PAGED IN HONG KONG'S PRC-OWNED "WEN WEI PAO" THE FOLLOWING DAY, REPORTED A FIGURE OF 90 MILLION FOR CHINA'S MOST POPULOUS PROVINCE. THE FIGURE WAS REPEATED APRIL 30 IN A SZECHUAN PROVINCIAL BROADCAST. THE MOST RECENT PREVIOUS STATISTIC WAS 80 MILLION, REPORTED IN A SZECHUAN PROVINCIAL BROADCAST OF OCTOBER 11, 1976.

2. THIS APPARENT INCREASE OF 10 MILLION OVER A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS IS ILLUSTRATIVE OF CHINA'S CHRONICALLY LOW ESTIMATES IN REPORTING POPULATION STATISTICS. AT THE TIME OF CHAIRMAN MAO'S DEATH LAST FALL, WE COMPILED A LIST OF CHINA'S POPULATION BY PROVINCE, USING THE MOST CURRENT CHINESE SOURCES, AND ARRIVED AT A NATIONAL POPULATION FIGURE OF 853.2 MILLION (REF B). AT THAT TIME, WE COMMENTED THAT THE TOTAL FIGURE WAS PROBABLY SHORT OF THE ACTUAL NUMBER, AND THIS NEW

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SZECHUAN STATISTIC, SEEMING TO REPRESENT AN ABSOLUTE POPULATION INCREASE OF 12.5 PERCENT OVER A SIX-MONTH PERIOD, SUPPORTS THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE NATIONAL FIGURE OF LAST FALL IS SIMILARLY LOW.

3. BY PROJECTING SZECHUAN'S PAPER ADJUSTMENT OF 12 PERCENT TO LAST FALL'S NATIONAL COMPILATION, WE ARRIVE AT THE INTERESTING TOTAL OF NEARLY 960 MILLION. THIS IS ALMOST EXACTLY THE SAME NATIONAL POPULATION FIGURE AS THAT GIVEN BY CHINESE GUIDES TO THE VISITING U.S. NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATORS LAST DECEMBER (REF A). WHILE CERTAINLY NOT ABSOLUTE PROOF THAT CHINA NOW ESTIMATES ITS POPULATION AT 960 MILLION PEOPLE, THE LARGE STATISTICAL INCREASE IN SZECHUAN, COUPLED WITH THE FACT THAT THE CHINESE HAVE BEEN USING A NATIONAL FIGURE OF AT LEAST 900 MILLION FOR ALMOST A YEAR IN INTERNAL DOCUMENTS (REF C), SUGGEST THAT THE PRC MAY BE PREPARING THE GROUND FOR PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF A MORE REALISTIC POPULATION FIGURE.
CROSS

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